
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Christmas kindness



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ENGLISH

NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Alice

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Alice...

Neil

And I'm Neil... Did you get all your Christmas shopping done, Alice?

Alice

I did, Neil. And I spent a **small fortune** – and that means a lot of money!

Neil

Well, I hate buying all those presents that people just don't really want.

Alice

Oh, Neil, you grumpy old Scrooge! And I hope you realise that the subject of today's show is Christmas kindness!

Neil

Oh dear. I might be **grumpy** – and that means bad-tempered – but I'm not a scrooge! I don't mind spending money – I just don't know what to buy people. Ebenezer Scrooge is the main character in Charles Dickens' novel *A Christmas Carol*. He's a **miser** – and that means someone who loves money but hates spending it.

Alice

Indeed. Well, on the subject of *A Christmas Carol*, Neil, at the end of the story, what does Scrooge buy the Cratchit family for Christmas dinner? Is it...

a) a goose?

b) a turkey?

Or c) a chicken?

Neil

Hmm. Well, I haven't read the book so I'm going to guess a) a goose.

Alice

Well, we'll find out later if you chose the right answer. Now, Neil, I agree that Christmas shopping can sometimes feel pointless – but we mustn't forget what a magical time Christmas is for young children.

Neil

Well, that's true. I remember how hard it was to get to sleep on Christmas Eve – worrying that Santa Claus would get stuck in our chimney.

Alice

Yes, well, **eve** means the day before something – in this case, Christmas Day. Parents tell their children that **Santa Claus** – an imaginary old man with a white beard and red clothes – will bring them presents at Christmas time. In the UK children believe that Santa comes down the chimney to get into the house.

Neil

But it's not all fun. Increasing numbers of people these days are struggling for money at this time of year. Having enough food to feed their family is what matters most and buying presents comes further down the list. So let's listen now to a BBC Scotland report by Laura Maxwell. She's talking about a special event with lots of presents.

INSERT

Laura Maxwell, BBC Scotland, and Beatrice Caddell

LM: Beatrice Cadell has just celebrated her 80th birthday. And instead of presents for her, she asked her friends to buy toys.

BC: Everyone that turned up to that birthday do was absolutely brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. And it's good for something like this. It's even better. It's even better – you know – somebody else can benefit. We don't need it. We're old.

Alice

So Beatrice is celebrating her birthday and she told friends and family to buy toys instead of presents for her.

Neil

Right. She had the generous idea of **donating** – or giving – the toys to a **toy bank** – a place where toys are given away free to people in need. The toy bank then distributed Beatrice's toys to parents who couldn't afford to buy presents for their children at Christmas.

Alice

Yes. So Beatrice is happy that children can **benefit** – or be helped by her. She says she doesn't need presents. A woman **after your own heart**, Neil!

Neil

Indeed! And that means Beatrice has the same opinion as me! Well, that's a great example of Christmas charity – and **charity** means giving free help to people who need it.

Alice

Yes. And here's another example, Neil. Last year in London, twenty tons of presents were donated, wrapped, and delivered to a local hospital to cheer up sick children who couldn't go home for Christmas.

Neil

Were they delivered in Santa's sleigh?

Alice

No Neil, they were delivered in a big double-decker bus! Let's hear about the volunteers who made this happen.

INSERT

Volunteer

Lots of different groups of people come together under the banner of kindness – so religious people come together, corporate people come together, young people, old people – it seems to be something that stretches across many many many different demographics.

Neil

Under the banner of kindness – what does that mean, Alice?

Alice

Well, **being under the banner of something** means being part of a group who are united in support for an idea. And in this case, different people came together to do something kind for sick children.

Neil

And demographics? What's that?

Alice

Demographics means statistical information about a population and the groups of people in it. People from different groups in society are working together – the old and the young, religious people, corporate – or business – people.

Neil

And this talk of kindness is making me feel more in the mood for Christmas!

Alice

I can see that, Ebenezer. You've got a smile on your face! Now, earlier in the show, I asked:

At the end of the story, what does Scrooge buy the Cratchit family for Christmas dinner? Is it... a) a goose? b) a turkey? Or c) a chicken?

Neil

And I said a) a goose.

Alice

Yes. And you were wrong, Neil! The answer is b) a turkey.

Neil

That makes me a goose.

Alice

It certainly does. Scrooge buys the Cratchit family the prize turkey hanging. Delicious! *A Christmas Carol* is a lovely story. Everybody should read it.

Neil

And did you know that although turkeys are traditional Christmas food now, they weren't in Dickens's time.

Alice

I see...

Neil

They were **exotic** back then – and that means unusual because it comes from another country. The story was written in 1843. Now how about hearing the words we learned today, Alice?

Alice

They are:
a small fortune
grumpy
miser
eve
Santa Claus
donating
toy bank
benefit
after your own heart
charity
under the banner of something
demographics
exotic

Neil

Well, that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. Merry Christmas, everybody!

Alice

Merry Christmas!

Neil

Please join us again soon!

Both

Bye.

Vocabulary

a small fortune

a lot of money

grumpy

bad-tempered

miser

somebody who loves money but hates spending it

eve

the day before something e.g. Christmas Eve

Santa Claus

an imaginary old man with a white beard and red clothes who brings children presents at Christmas time

donating

giving for free

toy bank

a place where toys are given away free to people in need

benefit

be helped by

after your own heart

someone who has the same opinion as you

charity

giving free help to people who need it

under the banner of

being part of a group who are united in support for an idea

demographics

statistical information about a population and the groups of people in it

exotic

unusual because it comes from another country